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## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

To: Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee

January 13, 2011

From: Newtown Conservation Commission

Re: Evaluation of Fairfield Hills Land by Conservation Commission. January, 2011

The Conservation Commission has evaluated the land at Fairfield Hills and commissioners have walked all of the undeveloped land. We are providing recommendations for open space set asides at Fairfield Hills under our charter to “Conduct researches into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas in the Town of Newtown” and to “Recommend to the First Selectman, the Legislative Council or the Planning and Zoning Commission such plans and programs (including the acquisition of conservation easements) for the development and use of open areas within the Town of Newtown”

The following features were noted:

- Rolling contoured land
- Scenic vistas from many perspectives
- Scenic Town corridor along Wasserman Way and Mile Hill South Road
- A network of actively used trails, some improved
- Meadow habitat
- Hay fields
- Areas of young deciduous forest
- Pine and spruce stands
- Wolf trees
- Waterways
- Rock walls
- Chimney ruins
- Wildlife corridors
- Many bird species (bobolinks, warblers, woodcocks, blue birds, screech owls, turkey vultures and red tailed hawks have been observed.)

This large tract of land is highly visible upon entering Newtown. Thus visitors to the area and residents of Newtown are greeted by beautiful, rolling vistas. This has been documented as being very important to Newtown’s citizens: in a recent survey, residents voted maintaining the rural character of the town as priority number 2.

Because development causes many environmental problems due to forest fragmentation, preserving a large uninterrupted tract of land such as this could alleviate some of these, such as decreasing biodiversity of flora and fauna, increasing incidence of zoonoses, etc.

The diverse habitats that are represented (meadow, deciduous and coniferous forested areas, edge habitat) support many different species. Birds of prey are important given the increase in small disease carrying rodents that occurs with development and forest fragmentation. Migrating birds depend on large, visible areas of undeveloped land as they fly to summer or winter habitats.

The Fairfield Hills campus is a natural site for a Newtown trails hub connecting several already existing trails including Al's trail, the Rail Trail extension from Monroe, and Town property southeast of the junction of Wasserman Way with Nunnawauk Road.

The property supports passive recreational activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog walking, horse riding, biking and wildlife study.

The already developed land in Fairfield Hills is already used for running, walking, dog walking, tricycling, etc. and makes a natural connection to the undeveloped areas. We would suggest that this be taken into account in future planning to ensure that sidewalks are continuous so that foot traffic can be kept safe from automobile traffic.

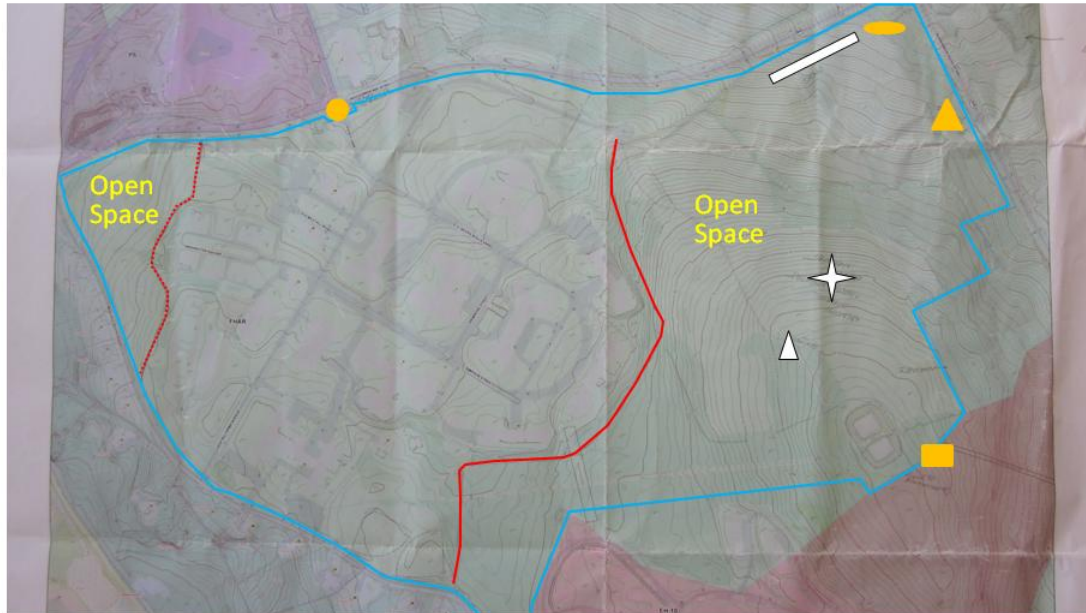
Land at Fairfield Hills would be ideal for a community garden. This is an idea that has been developed in other communities to provide low cost, locally grown produce. Plots could be rented to residents with a sliding scale to allow for access for low income families. Some of the land is flat, fertile and sunny and would be suitable for this use.

The conservation commission recommends preserving the large undeveloped tracts of land as marked on the accompanying map as open space in perpetuity, either through zone change or deed restriction.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you and other Town Boards and Commissions on this important issue. If there are any questions please contact Commission members Marj Cramer at 203-426-5212, Adria Henderson at 203-816-7170, Mary Wilson at 203-426-6518, or Rob Sibley at 203-270 4276.

## Appendix (added by Deb Zukowski, Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review member)

Image of map provided by the Conservation Commission. Notes they made during their property review have been called out by the shapes and lines added over the image.



- |  |                          |                   |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|
| — FFH Property Boundary                              | ● Connects to Al's Trail | ▲ Pines Trail     |
| ..... West Meadow Boundary                           | ■ Trail to Nunnawalk     | ● Yahoo Hill      |
| — High/East Meadow Boundary                          | △ Conifers ?             | ▭ Scenic Corridor |
| ★ Wildlife Corridor, Nesting Habitat, Meadow Habitat |                          |                   |

Note that all markings are approximate.